

## **Fall Color Report – 10/23/2020**



### **Northwest**

The colors of fall are peaking in many parts of Illinois, and are actually a bit past peak in some northern counties.

In those northwest areas, red maple leaves are bright red, while silver and sugar maples show the whole spectrum from yellow to yellow/orange to green to red. Crimson king maples in yards are turning reddish brown. Walnut trees are dropping leaves fast, while oaks show green to orange to brown (white oaks are showing some dark pink/red and red oaks are flashing burgundy and yellow/brown). Boxelder trees are green to yellow, and hickories are burnt orange to red. Sumac is red and holding (if they still have leaves). Dogwood shrubs along roadsides have dulled to a grayish brown, and the burning bushes are holding on to scarlet and reddish brown colors.

### **Northeast**

Things are really looking nice in much of northeast Illinois – and now is the time to see the show with not much green left in the woods. The oaks are red, orange, and brown and look really nice this year. Maples leaves are purple, red, and orange. Hickories are looking bright yellow with some brown.

Recent strong winds in the region stripped many leaves off trees prematurely. However, those holding on look good south and west of Chicago. Sugar maples are reddish orange; red maples show blushes of red if leaves remain, while silver maples look a bit washed out in yellow. Unexposed hackberry trees look about the same. Catalpa leaves are yellowish green, while sassafras is winding down its reds, purples and oranges. Oaks are a bit delayed, with the reds, blacks, pins, scarlet, and shingle. If any of the red oaks (those with pins on the ends of their

leaves) are almost done, it's the black oaks with predominately brownish red color. White oaks are still changing, with burs, whites, swamp white, chestnut, overcup and chinquapin showing more than half in color of reds to washed-out yellowish brown, with green remaining throughout. Walnuts are done in northeast Illinois and hickories are yellowish brown.

### **North Central**



It is a bit past peak in north central Illinois, and recent rains and high winds have stripped a lot of the yellow color out of the forested areas. There are many of the oaks that kept their leaves through the stormy weather showing some great color heading into the weekend, with various shades of red and reddish brown. The urban landscape is still full of specimen trees with beautiful maple cultivars and many different shrubs like sumac and burning bush. There are still bursts of flower color in the roadsides (asters/goldenrods). The Mackinaw River drainage has a lot of this color and is worth getting off the beaten path to explore and see in McLean and Woodford counties.

### **Central**

It is peak color time throughout much of central Illinois, with sugar maples in oranges and reds and oaks beginning to turn bronze, yellow, and red. Some orange and yellow in the hickories and sugar maples remain in eastern counties, but many leaves have turned to brown or blown away. White oaks are mostly turning a scarlet red or purple and black and red oaks are turning a yellow orange to red.

### **West Central**

In areas of west central Illinois, the peak is passing fast. There is still some nice color out in the woods, though maples lost a lot of leaves due to high winds. Cottonwoods, ash and walnut trees are mostly bare. Tulip poplar is just starting to turn golden. White oaks are turning maroon/purple, but also brown due to colder nights. Black oaks are brown, as are many of the hickories. At the same time, some of the oaks are still very green.

Near the Illinois River, there is still good color where leaves haven't blown away. The oaks are just now starting to show some nice red colors.



With the exception of pecan and some stubborn oak species which remain predominantly green, the foliage of most other area tree species continues to actively turn between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. Hickory, Paw Paw, Osage orange, mulberry, catalpa, and buckeye trees continue to yellow; sugar maples and ash are readily showing yellow/red/gold/purple /orange; patches of sumac and individual sassafras and dogwoods continue to redden. Areas with heavy populations of sugar maples continue to be quite beautiful, but their peak colors are now on the decline as many trees have been steadily losing leaves. Take a drive this weekend near the big rivers and see the show.

### **South**

In parts of southern Illinois, the sumac and dogwoods are showing magnificent hues of red along with most white oaks that are scarlet red and even have a purple tint to them. Green ash trees which turn yellow lost many leaves with the wind events last week but white ash are still holding some deep purple colors that are a favorite each fall. Hickories are turning orange-yellow and then brown. Some of those in the red oak group (pin, black, northern red, etc.) are beginning to turn burnt orange hues, but many are still green. Many low-lying areas where the trees are comprised of walnut and cottonwoods have many that have lost most of their leaves.

The sassafras is just about done turning color, while the Virginia creeper vines are still mainly red; a few of the of the white ash trees are still showing red/purple leaves.

In deep southern Illinois, there is still a lot of green, but trees have starting turning during the past week. A good number of trees have already lost many of their leaves. Hickory leaves are currently a nice golden yellow. Bald cypress trees in swamps are also a beautiful sight to see; they are one of two deciduous conifers and lose their leaves every year, and are turning a nice

rust color before dropping needles. The recent rain has made many of the trees 'glow' with green and gray lichens that contrast with their dark bark.

At Cache River State Natural Area, tree varieties which have lost most if not all of their leaves include black walnut, sumac, tulip (yellow) poplar, sycamore, and honey locust. The hickories have really come to the fore with color change. Oaks and silver maples are still very green compared to other species, but the landscape view is now more color than green. The color peak should occur during the next week or so, if the leaves don't blow away.